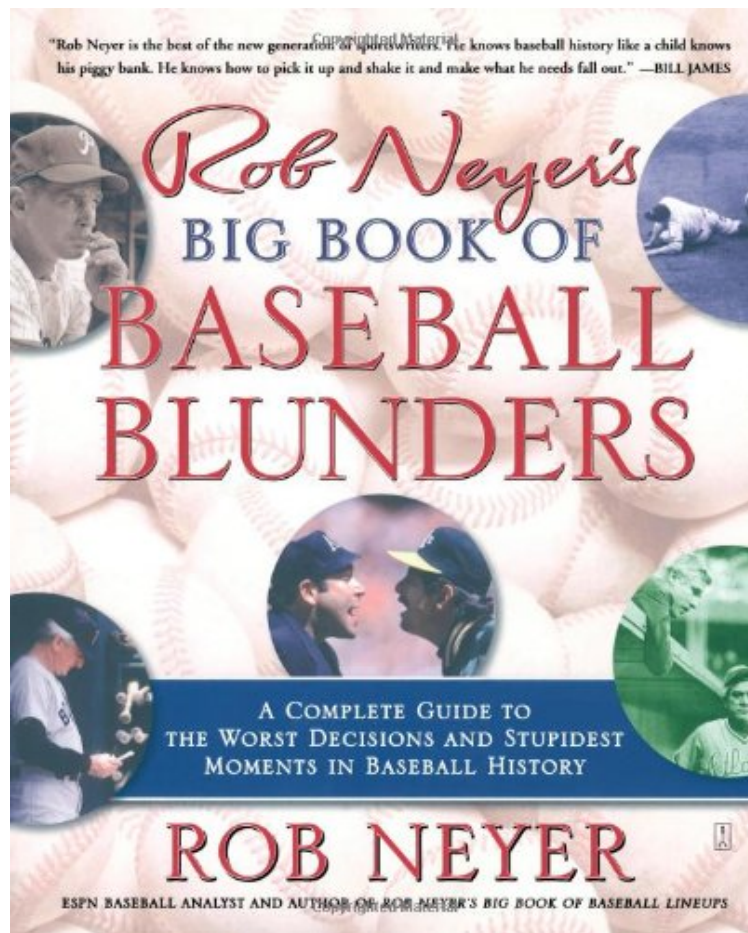


[Free] Rob Neyer's Big Book of Baseball Blunders: A Complete Guide to the Worst Decisions and Stupidest Moments in Baseball History

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Rob Neyer

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Rob Neyer : Rob Neyer's Big Book of Baseball Blunders: A Complete Guide to the Worst Decisions and Stupidest Moments in Baseball History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Rob Neyer's Big Book of Baseball Blunders: A Complete Guide to the Worst Decisions and Stupidest Moments in Baseball History:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Leonard Trerotola Great item and service!
A+++++++2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A baseball fan's delight By Barry Sparks Rob Neyer's book of baseball blunders is sure to please any baseball fan with a sense of history. Neyer analyzes 50 trades and

decisions from 1917 through 2003. They range from well-known events such as Grady Little's decision to lift Pedro Martinez in the eighth inning of the 2003 American League Championship series and the trade of Roger Maris from the Kansas City Athletics to the New York Yankees in 1959 to lesser-known events such as the sale of Pee Wee Reese from the Boston Red Sox to the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1939 and the Kansas City Royals' signing of pitchers Mark and Storm Davis in 1989. Neyer astutely analyzes these events, challenging long held opinions and impressions by looking at the facts. Neyer is a keen observer of baseball history and his analyses are interesting and sound. His sidebars in the margins of chapters are irresistible. Baseball fans can open this book to any chapter and start reading. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Misleading title

By ERIC M HUYNH I'm a huge Rob Neyer fan. I've read almost every (free) column he's published on the Internet since 1997, and I've read most of his books (and plan to buy and read ALL of them, past and future). So it's with a little regret that I give this one a mediocre review. (I'd give it 3.5 stars if possible.) First of all, it's called "Big Book of Baseball Blunders," which would naturally lead you to believe that it will be a ranking (or chronological list) of the biggest "mistakes" in baseball history. We get a clarification very early on that it's not about on-field mistakes or "boners," but rather premeditated errors, usually made by management. OK, so far, so good: Rob Neyer makes fun of stupid front offices with the benefit of hindsight AND a logical mind. That should be fun, right? But once the book starts, you realize that this is NOT Rob's personal ranking of the biggest blunders in baseball history. Rather, it's a list of moves that were considered blunders by historical consensus, and then Rob does some research and evaluates whether they were truly blunders. (This is the same M.O. he uses in the later "Baseball Legends.") So it's more like "Rob Neyer's Big Book of Famous Alleged Baseball Blunders and His Analysis of Whether They Were Blunders or Not." Fair enough, this could also be a good book if the opinions were interesting or eye-opening... but they're really not. A disappointing proportion of them end up with Rob meekly concluding: "We can't really tell one way or the other." This diplomatic response may make Rob seem like a "nice guy" (so many stats-oriented baseball writers come off as smug and arrogant, and I think he was specifically trying to avoid that) but it makes for a disappointingly flat baseball book. A little controversy isn't bad! I'm able to come up with NO OPINION without reading a book, thank you very much. This book is also a victim of some careless copyediting. It's not as bad as the typical edition of "Baseball Prospectus," but there are a lot of little typos and a few actual mistakes that should have been caught. And if you've already read his earlier "Big Book of Baseball Lineups" (a superior product IMHO), there's quite a bit of thematic repetition. On the positive side, Neyer's prose is always readable, he's a good storyteller, and there's some valuable baseball history in here. I definitely learned some stuff from this book, and it wasn't a chore to get through. But Neyer is capable of much better -- I preferred "Baseball Dynasties" and "Baseball Lineups," and his mid-'90s columns on ESPN.com completely changed the way I look at baseball. Fine for the fanatic or Neyer completist, but not an essential book. I'd recommend "Lineups" or "Dynasties" before this one.

BLOOPER: BALL SQUIRTS THROUGH BILLY BUCKNER'S LEGS. BLUNDER: BILLY BUCKNER'S MANAGER LEFT HIM IN THE GAME. Baseball bloopers are fun; they're funny, even. A pitcher slips on the mound and his pitch sails over the backstop. An infielder camps under a pop-up...and the ball lands ten feet away. An outfielder tosses a souvenir to a fan...but that was just the second out, and runners are circling the bases (and laughing). Without these moments, the highlight reels wouldn't be nearly as entertaining. Baseball blunders, however, can be tragic, and they will leave diehard fans asking why...why...why? Rob Neyer's Big Book of Baseball Blunders does its best to answer all those whys, exploring the worst decisions and stupidest moments of managers, general managers, owners, and even commissioners. As he did in his Big Book of Baseball Lineups, Rob Neyer provides readers with a fascinating examination of baseball's rich history, this time through the lens of the game's sometimes hilarious, often depressing, and always perplexing blunders. · Which ill-fated move cost the Chicago White Sox a great hitter and the 1919 World Series? · What was Babe Ruth thinking when he became the first (and still the only) player to end a World Series by getting caught trying to steal? · Did playing one-armed Pete Gray in 1945 cost the Browns a pennant? · How did winning a coin toss lead to the Dodgers losing the National League pennant on Bobby Thomson's "Shot Heard 'round the World"? · How damaging was the Frank Robinson-for-Milt Pappas deal, really? · Which of Red Sox manager Don Zimmer's mistakes in 1978 was the worst? · Which Yankees trade was even worse than swapping Jay Buhner for Ken Phelps? · What non-move cost Buck Showalter a job and gave Joe Torre the opportunity of a lifetime? · Game 7, 2003 ALCS: Pedro winds up to throw his 123rd pitch...what were you thinking? These are just a few of the legendary (and not-so-legendary) blunders that Neyer analyzes, always with an eye on what happened, why it happened, and how it changed the fickle course of history. And in separate chapters, Neyer also reviews some of the game's worst trades and draft picks and closely examines all the teams that fell just short of first place. Another in the series of Neyer's Big Books of baseball history, Baseball Blunders should win a place in every devoted fan's library.

"Rob Neyer is the best of the new generation of sportswriters. He knows baseball history like a child knows his piggy bank. He knows how to pick it up and shake it and make what he needs fall out." - Bill James

About the Author Rob Neyer has written about baseball for ESPN.com since 1996 and appears regularly on ESPN News. He has written four

baseball books, including *The Neyer/James Guide to Pitchers* (with Bill James) and Rob Neyer's *Big Book of Baseball Lineups*. His website, www.robneyer.com, contains additional material related to this and his other books. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

"What's a blunder?" When I told people...cab drivers, deliverymen, the produce guy at the grocery store...I was writing a book about baseball blunders, that was always what they wanted to know. What's a blunder? Here's what a blunder isn't: a blunder isn't a physical mistake or an error of judgment in the heat of the moment. In other words, in my book (in this book) it's only a blunder if there was premeditation. Bill Buckner did not blunder when he let that ball squirt between his legs; John McNamara did blunder when he let Bill Buckner let that ball squirt between his legs. So that's one requirement: the blunder must be premeditated. Somebody has to have thought, "Hey, this would be a good idea." Another requirement: a reasonable person might, at the time, have made a reasonable case for doing something else. It's impossible to avoid the temptation of hindsight, and I'm not going to ignore a player's on-base percentage simply because his manager had never heard of on-base percentage. But I'll be as fair as I can be. And thirdly -- or rather, ideally, because some of the blunders in this book don't completely meet this test -- the blunder must have led to some reasonably ill outcome. You're not going to find much in this book about the St. Louis Browns or the Boston Braves or other similarly woebegotten franchises, because their fortunes were far beyond the reach of just one move, good or bad. In fact, many of the blunders within were committed by good teams and good managers and good general managers. Their blunders are generally the ones that mattered. Premeditation. Contemporary questionability. III effects. That's the perfect blunder. And most of the blunders in this book are, to me at least, perfect. Occasionally I've fudged a bit on the last of those categories, but I think you'll agree with me that, even if the Indians' ten-cent Beer Night did no lasting damage, it was a pretty crummy idea. Some might argue that it's cruel of me to highlight the failures of my fellow men. After all, haven't they suffered enough? Well, maybe they have. But 1) many of the men featured within these pages are no longer walking this earth, and 2) there's nothing I'm going to write that hasn't been written elsewhere, and with less compassion than I've got in my medium-sized heart. And again, this book isn't about mistakes. Every pitcher grooves the occasional slider, every hitter sometimes misses a hit-me fastball in the middle of the strike zone, and every umpire blows a big call every so often. But there's only so much we can do with those. Yes, Luis Aparicio slipped as he rounded third base in a big game in 1972, and if he hadn't slipped the Red Sox might have wound up in the World Series. Yes, the umpires blew any number of calls during the 2005 World Series, without which the Astros might at least have won a game or two. But what are we supposed to do with those? I remember reading about an umpire who, when he got a call wrong and knew it, would tell the protesting manager, "Okay, so I missed that one. Now what do we do?" We can use Luis Aparicio to illustrate a cautionary tale about taking special care when rounding third base, and we can use Don Denkinger to argue for the use of instant replay in important baseball games. But then what do we do? We can't really hold Aparicio or Denkinger responsible for what happened -- they weren't trying to do what they did -- and neither can we really learn much from what happened. All of which is my long-winded way of saying that this book isn't about Luis Aparicio and Don Denkinger or any of the other thousands of players and umpires who have, at some key moment in baseball history, messed up. This book is, for the most part, about managers and general managers and owners who sat down, considered something for at least a moment, and said, "I sure think this would be a good idea." Except it wasn't.

A Note about Statistics For better or worse, this book isn't filled with sophisticated statistical methods. It's not that I don't care about such things. If you've read my work in other places, you know that I do. It's just that I've found that blunt instruments do, for the most part, tell us most of what we want to know. You will find, in these pages, a few statistical measures that you don't see in your newspaper every day, but they're nothing to get worked up about. "ERA+" is simply the ratio of the league ERA to the pitcher's ERA (adjusted for the pitcher's home ballpark). An ERA+ of 100 is dead average. Anything above 100 is better than average, anything below 100 is worse than average, and yes it's really that simple. My source for ERA+ (and many of the other statistics in this book) was www.baseball-reference.com. (My other primary source for statistics was www.retrosheet.org, which is only the greatest Web site in the history of the InterWeb.) Win Shares are somewhat more complicated, but here's what you need to know: Win Shares were invented by Bill James. Win Shares are published in *Total Baseball* and various other books and Web sites. Win Shares represent an effort to sum a player's total value to his team, including hitting, pitching, fielding, and base-stealing. Three Win Shares equals one win (so a player with thirty Win Shares is worth three wins more than a player with twenty-one Win Shares). And why Win Shares? Because Win Shares are the best tool we've got for evaluating the long-term impact of trades, and trades occasionally will come up in the pages that follow. Sometimes I'll write that a player "batted .300"; that means his batting average was .300. Sometimes I'll write that a player "batted .300/.400/.500"; those numbers are his batting average, his on-base percentage, and his slugging percentage. And that's about it. I told you, I'm not sophisticated.

A Note about Tables I can't help myself. I just love 'em. I wrote another book a few years ago, with a title similar to this one, that was essentially three hundred pages of tables. Nobody squawked, because the book wouldn't have worked without tables. This one, though, would've been just fine without them, and if one hundred authors were asked to write a book like this one, ninety-five would make do without any tables (or with many fewer of them). I like them, though, so I use them. Don't be afraid. They're just more words, except they look like numbers (or maybe the words are numbers, except they look like words; I can't remember).

A Note About the Old

Days You're not going to find much about them here. I tried. I really did. I asked all my friends to suggest long-ago blunders, and I even came up with a few candidates on my own. In 1890, the players formed their own league. They called it the Players' League. Most of the best players joined up, and I suspect one could make a fairly convincing argument that the National League in 1890, bereft of its stars, wasn't really a "major" league at all. The Players' League competed directly against the National League in seven cities, and attracted more fans in five of them. Both leagues lost a great deal of money, and after the season the Players' League -- especially the nonplayers who provided most of the financial backing -- blinked first during negotiations with the National. The players would have to wait for another eighty-five years for some measure of justice. Following the 1899 season, the National League contracted, shedding franchises in Baltimore, Louisville, Washington, and Cleveland. This came near the end of a period in which the magnates practiced something called "syndicate baseball," whereby many owners had financial interests in more than one team. You can, I suspect, see the problem with such an arrangement, and in '99 this was manifested in its illogical extreme, as the Cleveland Spiders won twenty games and lost 134. Contraction helped foster the nascent American League, which opened play in 1900 with a team in Cleveland, and in 1901 shifted franchises to Baltimore and Washington. That began a sort of war between the leagues, which wound up costing everybody a lot of money. And the National League owners might have saved themselves the headache if they'd kept franchises in Washington and Cleveland, placed new franchises in Detroit and New York, and formed two six-team divisions. (Yes, I know this takes some imagination. Now you see why this doesn't get its own chapter.) In 1908, Fred Merkle neglected to touch second base in a big game late in the season. This was certainly a blunder -- actually, at the time it was called a "boner" -- but for the purposes of this book, it wasn't a "blunder" because Merkle didn't think about not touching second base. It was more or less an accepted practice, and he certainly didn't consider the possible ramifications. On the last day of the 1910 season, the St. Louis Browns conspired to throw the American League batting title to Nap Lajoie, and away from Ty Cobb. The winner of the title had been promised a shiny new Chalmers "30" automobile, and just about everybody in the American League was pulling for Lajoie. Cobb, apparently with a safe lead in the race, decided to skip the Tigers' last two games. To catch Cobb, Lajoie would need a hit in nearly every at-bat during a doubleheader against the Browns on the season's final day. And thanks to the Browns, that's what Lajoie did. Browns manager Jack O'Connor told rookie third baseman Red Corriden to play deep when Lajoie batted. Real deep. Lajoie tripled in his first at-bat. In each of his next eight at-bats, though, Lajoie bunted toward third base, and was credited with seven hits and one fielder's choice. (After the fielder's choice, Browns coach Harry Howell sent a note to the official scorer, offering to buy the scorer a new suit if he would change his ruling.) The results? They're complicated. Lajoie went 8 for 9, but when the figures were computed, Cobb was still ahead by a single point, .385 to .384. In the end, though, Chalmers awarded automobiles to both players, O'Connor and Howell were both fired, and Ban Johnson "use...